

WHITNEY MUSEUM
OF AMERICAN ART

GORKY'S BETROTHALS

OCTOBER 6, 1993

JANUARY 9, 1994

COLLECTION IN CONTEXT

Arshile Gorky's *Betrothals* (1947), completed a year before the artist's tragic death, are key works in the history of twentieth-century American art. After years of private ownership, each was acquired by a major American museum. *The Betrothal*, probably the first in the group, was virtually unknown until it was bequeathed to the Yale University Art Gallery in 1980. For this reason, the complete *Betrothal* series was not included in the Gorky memorial exhibition held at the Whitney Museum in 1951, nor in the two subsequent Gorky retrospective exhibitions in New York, at The Museum of Modern Art in 1962 and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1981. The present exhibition is thus the first time that the three *Betrothals* are being seen together, accompanied by many of the preliminary studies.

The Whitney Museum of American Art and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, have co-organized "Gorky's *Betrothals*." At the Whitney, the exhibition is presented as part of the new "Collection in Context" series, which offers fresh perspectives on acknowledged masterpieces as well as on lesser-known treasures in the Museum's Permanent Collection. MOCA is including the exhibition in its "Focus Series," an ongoing program of small-scale, overlapping exhibitions that give an intimate view of various aspects of contemporary art.

When seen as part of a group, along with related drawings and studies, each of *The Betrothals* is revealed not only as an individual masterwork, but as a moment in a continuous process of being, one of a chain of artistic experiments in which the artist engaged throughout his life. "I never finish a painting," Gorky said shortly before his death, "I just stop working on it for a while."

Mary Gardner Neill, director of the Yale University Art Gallery, enthusiastically participated in this project, as did the other lenders, especially Gorky family members Agnes Fielding and Maro Gorky Spender and Matthew Spender. Melvin P. Lader of George Washington University, who is currently working on a catalogue raisonné of Gorky's drawings, generously shared his research and counseled us on numerous issues of provenance and chronology. Harry Rand, Allan Stone, and especially Stephen Mazoh also offered valuable assistance in the organization of this exhibition.

Adam D. Weinberg, Curator, Permanent Collection
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Paul Schimmel, Chief Curator
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

This exhibition is supported at the Whitney Museum by grants from Charles Simon and the Lobby Gallery Associates.

ARSHILE GORKY'S UNRESOLVABLE STRUGGLE FOR AN AMBIGUOUS PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

Right up to his death by suicide in 1948, Arshile Gorky had revealed to public examination the difficult process by which the most advanced compositions of his last years had come into existence. With an almost feverish productivity, he labored endlessly over themes and compositions, refining and articulating the subjects. Following the classical canon of academic painting, Gorky employed a rigorous system to develop structure and iconography. He began with a series of studies, which led to a series of designs, which in turn culminated in several finished compositions. Individually, the final paintings are characterized by the spontaneity of the brushstroke, the intuition of the line, the chance of a drip, and the freshness of an unrevised accident. Seen together with their antecedents, however, one finds the overwhelming evidence of an intensely labored development that had as its conclusion a work that looks "fresh," "spontaneous," and "indecisive," but is in fact the result of a long and academic process of realization.

The Betrothal, one of the key series produced during Gorky's last full year of painting (1947), provides an exemplary opportunity to understand the seemingly convoluted method by which he realized his mature abstract compositions. There are at least fourteen extant works that are specifically studies, designs, and final compositions on the theme, and we can assume that there are several yet to be identified and others missing in this count. As was typical with all the major themes of his late work, Gorky began with a series of small notebook studies that examined both the general composition and individual elements in greater detail. For *The Betrothal*, there are at least three studies of the overall composition, and three more of individual elements and figures in the 11 x 8 1/2 -inch notebook size. These were followed by another group of at least four more studies, larger in scale and more detailed. Gorky, obviously not satisfied with the composition, continued to articulate and refine both iconographic and formal elements. One of these studies was mechanically gridded for transfer to canvas (Fig. 3); another (the largest of the studies), begins to capture the texture and nuance of the final compositions. The series was completed only after Gorky had executed three final compositions in oil, one on paper and two on canvas.

Gorky, who stands as the last Surrealist or the first Abstract Expressionist (or, at least, the father of Abstract Expressionism, as Cézanne was to Cubism¹), is quite apart from the New York School painters (with the possible exception of de Kooning) with his somewhat arcane classical methodology. The relationship of the drawings of Rothko, Newman, Pollock, Kline, Motherwell, and Hofmann to their paintings is not so consistently specific and academic as in Gorky's work. Gorky only allowed himself the freedom to paint, to make a

mark or gesture, after he had fully woven the compositions and iconography into his own fabric.

Gorky's parentage of Abstract Expressionism has as its foundation the assumption that his work of the 1940s broke with the traditions of classicism and modernism, to which he had held fast throughout his formative years as an artist. Harold Rosenberg stated in 1962 that

the loosening of the "classical" stranglehold has its strongest effect upon his compositions. His formerly unyielding forms open to welcome the unexpected, the outrageous, even. Tightly impacted organizations of carefully limited elements give way to litter and tiny afterthoughts. Details seem thrown around, or thrown in for their own sake, and one is aware of scattering and "disarticulation." His paint no longer applies itself layer upon layer within an outlined area—it moves, dabbles, spills, sometimes bursts up in a gust like the flame of a match.²

Even a cursory investigation into any series of work from the later period would reveal that Rosenberg's analysis could not be further from the truth: he had been taken in by appearances. Gorky had created the *illusion* of dabbles, spills, and bursts. He illustrated "disarticulation," and carried "bursts" from drawing to drawing, carefully arranging them in his final compositions. Rosenberg believed that Gorky was "literally beside himself, that is, acting outside the limits of his self-consciousness."³ Obviously, as his working methods indicate, Gorky was not beside himself. Indeed, quite the opposite, for the very same marks that Rosenberg interpreted as expressions of the most intimate confidence were instead highly evolved, carefully contrived, and masterfully executed examples of deception. For Gorky, it was not just the evolution of themes through protracted study, but the simultaneous controlled development of abstract form—brushstroke, drip, gesture—that gives the appearance of chance and spontaneity.

No artist of the New York School was so dependent on an evolutionary step-by-step development of both form and iconography as was Gorky. This, of course, makes sense given his roots in European modernist painting, especially that of Cézanne and Picasso, and his great passion for the old master painting of Uccello, Grünewald, and Ingres.

In 1946, Gorky began to execute increasingly specific and concrete studies of *The Betrothal* in ink, pencil, watercolor, crayon, and charcoal (in varying combinations); the earliest of these (Figs. 1, 2) have many of the elements found in the final composition. Clearly, he had a specific composition in mind from the outset: "the wooing and drawing together of the sexes."⁴ The iconography is not, however, so consistently specific that the figures, the sexes, or the animal can be conclusively identified; this ambiguity is in fact a hallmark of Gorky's pictorial language and has led to much speculation about the iconography of Gorky's work, in general and in *The Betrothal*.



Fig. 1 Study for *The Betrothal*, 1946

Ethel Schwabacher was the first to identify the source of the composition in Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* canvases (c. 1455).⁵ Julien Levy (Gorky's friend and dealer) suggested that Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23) was a possible inspiration for the marriage motif, as was Gorky's own marriage to Agnes Magruder in September 1941.⁶ In one of the most comprehensive attempts to unravel Gorky's iconography, Harry Rand's watershed study⁷ analyzes both the drawings and the paintings, deciphering, in various stages of development, images of several figures (people, dogs,

horses) and very personal cultural references: for instance, he identifies "small gold ceremonial crowns" used in traditional Armenian wedding ceremonies.⁸ As interesting as the absolute unraveling of Gorky's iconography is, it counters the artist's desire to obfuscate the specific meaning. His objects were not meant to provide a definitive reading in concrete pictorial space, but instead to create enough comprehension of image and form to invite interpretation without certainty.

Each of the final studies appears to accomplish an independent assignment; together these assignments provide Gorky with a complete understanding of what he strove to achieve in the oil paintings. First, the task of the drawing squared for transfer (Fig. 3) is clear: Gorky made a template for the most significant linear elements of his composition, to be transferred in relation to each other in multiple subsequent versions. Second, the dense watercolor in gray (Fig. 4) took Gorky to the other extreme: it is a nearly impenetrable density of black wash with linear elements almost made illegible through the vigorous application of black ink. Third, the large-scale study enabled Gorky to attempt a composition close to the final version, for the first time combining line, scale, and tone. In this, probably the final study for *The Betrothal*, Gorky brought all the elements together without ever fully integrating them. This lack of a complete integration of the painterly and linear elements is in fact a characteristic of *The Betrothal* at Yale. In many respects, this work is a continuation of the works on paper, most significantly in its extremely diluted pigment, which gives the oil on canvas a watercolorlike quality. This (most likely) initial attempt at painting *The Betrothal* in oil on canvas is by far the most rapidly executed composition; in combination with the almost aqueous characteristic of the paint, the result is a deceptively spontaneous finish. But it is, of course, a culmination of an extended

series of studies and has much in common with the linear elements of the transfer drawing.

One cannot conclusively prove that the Yale painting is the first of the oil compositions; however, its relative stylistic affinity to the studies would strongly indicate that it indeed was. This sequence is further confirmed by its iconographic similarities to the transfer drawing and *Betrothal I* at The Museum of Contemporary Art: the Yale *Betrothal* looks comfortable as an in-between evolutionary step. Although Gorky had moved to oil and canvas, he executed his first complete painting in the series in the manner of a watercolor. He allowed the bare canvas to provide a white ground, and within the composition (working counter to “traditions” of oil painting), he created a transparent composition that would have been more suited to paper.

This point is particularly noteworthy given that Gorky’s next composition, *Betrothal I*, is very much an oil painting, with its highly nuanced, multiple layers of paint, but Gorky chose to use paper instead of canvas as a support. To go forward, he had to step back, possibly needing the “comfort” of the material on which he had already explored variations of *The Betrothal*. In reproduction, without an indication of medium, one would assume that *The Betrothal* is executed on paper and *Betrothal I* is oil on canvas; this confusion is in keeping with Gorky’s often deliberately “awkward” method of achieving a fresh, original quality in a composition.

Betrothal I was likely begun with an underpainting in green and blue-purple, upon which Gorky vigorously overpainted a layer of ocher-mustard-brown colors to create areas of tonalities. He then made a line drawing from his squared drawing and used the underpainting to bring the composition to the point where he had left off in *The Betrothal*. On this compositional foundation, he added layer upon layer of nuance in color, and further articulated the iconography of *The Betrothal*. The contrast between the ephemeral sea foam green and blue-purple underpainting and that of the ocher overpainting gives a dynamic, vigorous quality to the emotionally charged composition: the tension created represents the sexual tension inherent in the vows of matrimony. Finally, dissatisfied with the legibility of the painting, Gorky carefully redrew in black the most essential linear elements. This linearity brings the dynamic composition back full circle to the squared drawing.

It seems clear from *The Betrothal II* (Whitney Museum of American Art) that it was paramount in Gorky’s thinking to further clarify and articulate his subject. There is a stronger contrast between the figures and ground, with an even greater range of colors than in *Betrothal I*: the figures, for the first time, have the startling electric quality Gorky wanted to make sure we could “read” the composition. To the palette of *Betrothal I*, he added canary yellow, purple, and red, dramatically separating the figure and horse from the background, in a manner that approaches the traditional Renaissance system of Uccello’s *Battle of San Romano*.

In a final, brilliant resolution of his own struggle to create a more indeterminate space, Gorky rejected specific iconography and the traditional figure-ground relationship. The linear elements needed to define the figure in *Betrothal I* are not necessary here; instead, the line has an increasingly independent quality, more exquisitely rendered than all its predecessors. In *The Betrothal II*, lines of ovals and rectangles bow and arch with an unseen pressure.

For an Abstract Expressionist, the unfinished and painterly qualities of *Betrothal I* were paradigmatic. However, for Gorky, *The Betrothal II* offered a more satisfying balance between painting and iconography, tradition and the avant-garde.

The formal and iconographic complexities of *The Betrothals* illustrate Gorky's own ambiguity. In these works, he conflated Armenian marriage tradition and European Renaissance painting, linearity and painterliness, all in the guise of an avant-garde artist. As rigorous as Gorky's methodology was, his own artistic language remained deliberately ambiguous. He established himself within the avant-garde while embracing traditional methods of classical painting in order to break with modernism. While *The Betrothals* anticipate the heroic advances of the New York School, they remain, in Gorky's intent, decidedly bound to the foundations of traditional painting. Gorky may have opened the door, but he didn't enter the room.

Paul Schimmel, Chief Curator

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

1. The comparison of Gorky with Cézanne is particularly intriguing. Cézanne's position as the father of Cubism (who, one might say, opened the door in anticipation but never walked in) is quite similar to Gorky's relationship to Abstract Expressionism. One can only wonder whether Cubism and Abstract Expressionism would have been the same without Cézanne's and Gorky's respective precedents.
2. Harold Rosenberg, *Arshile Gorky: The Man, the Time, the Idea* (New York: The Sheep Meadow Press/Flying Point Books, 1962), pp. 102-03.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
4. Ethel K. Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 128.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 131. The point has been reiterated by subsequent scholars. See William C. Seitz, *Arshile Gorky: Painting, Drawings, Studies*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962), p. 43; Brooks Joyner, *The Drawings of Arshile Gorky*, exh. cat. (College Park, Maryland: University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1969), p. 17.
6. Julien Levy, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), pp. 31-32.
7. Harry Rand, "The Implications of Symbols," in *Arshile Gorky* (Montclair, New Jersey: Allan Held, Osmun & Co., 1981), pp. 147-66.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 155.



The Betrothal, 1947



Betrothal I, 1947



The Betrothal II, 1947



Fig. 2. Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF METAMORPHOSIS

This first exhibition of all three versions of *The Betrothal*, one of Arshile Gorky's seminal late paintings, along with a group of related studies, is most immediately a celebration of the stunning psycho-visual profundity of one of our greatest artists. Seeing these works together helps us understand the literal and figurative multiplicity that is so much part of Gorky's undertaking.

"Pseudonym," "displacement," "camouflage," and "metamorphosis" are the key nouns embodied in the person and in the art of Arshile Gorky. His lyric and often searing palpitations of paint and form simultaneously conceal and transform their numerous and disparate sources. His polymorphous referentiality conspires with the finely tuned tension of his line and with his aqueous spumes of paint to produce a shimmering flux of hide and seek. While Gorky painstakingly constructed a visual vocabulary that he constantly recomposed in the discursive structuring of his painting, that vocabulary eludes the specificity of conventional iconography. As soon as we begin to identify one of his forms, that form dissolves and reforms into another form with another meaning. So the brief investigation of Gorky's working methods and subject matter undertaken here can provide only a few clues and no answers to the diaphanous enigmas enfolded by Gorky's drawing and painting.

"I respond to modern life as an Armenian from Van,"¹ Gorky wrote about his art; and, indeed, much of his mature work is fraught with yearning for his lost, bucolic childhood in rural Armenia and with memories of the violent dislocation brought about by the Turkish and German slaughter of ethnic Armenians in the wake of World War I (Gorky's mother died of starvation in his arms in 1919, when he was only fifteen). Immigrants such as Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Philip Guston, and Adolph Gottlieb played a major role in the formation of America's vanguard art in the 1940s. But Gorky's art, more than that of most of these other painters, makes visible his struggle to conflate "modern" with his deep love of the lore and landscape of his homeland. His cryptic combinations of organic forms are, in part, hybridizations of Armenian memory and Surrealist automatism. If we take into account Webster's second definition of "immigrant" ("an organism that appears where it was previously unknown"), then Gorky's is the immigrant art *par excellence*.

The Betrothal is part of Gorky's amazing (and last) burst of creativity in 1947, which includes *The Calendars*, *The Plough and the Song* (also in three versions), and *Agony*. *The Betrothal* incorporates forms that Gorky started to introduce into his work in the mid-1930s, after he had devotedly apprenticed his art to Cézanne's and while he was growing out of his subsequent apprenticeship to that of Picasso, and simultaneously assimilating the lessons of Miró. His final initiation into modernism was brought about through his dialogue with the younger immigrant painter Matta; and, by 1942, Gorky's nodular forms and vacillating grounds began to resonate with an imagistic

ambiguity and a pure painterly force that moved beyond Matta and Surrealism. It was then that Armenia began to play a more visibly dynamic role in the tension Gorky generated between his forms and their identity.

The central elements of *The Betrothal* combine in a rambling composite of interchangeably animal, vegetal, and mineral forms that metamorphose into a horse and female rider (the bride). The segmentation of the horse could as readily be antlike (Gorky drew close-ups of insects), podlike, rocklike, or visceral. The body of the horse evokes the shape of the magic boulder upon



Fig. 3 Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946–47

which the women of Gorky's village rubbed their breasts to ensure fertility, an image found in the *Garden of Sochi* paintings (1940–41).² The bridal attendant on the right, with what seems to be drooping breasts, recalls the upright plough on the left side of *The Plough and the Song*. The pointed petals emanating from the sagging mauve head (sunflower?) of the betrothed echo the pointed peaks of the cockscomb that is a liver that is the artist's palette in *The Liver Is the Cock's Comb* (1944). What appears to be the torso of a nude female leaning out of a rectangle (window) in the upper left corner recapitulates the succulent, fleshy

roundness of the apricots remembered in Gorky's parents' orchard and seen in two of his earlier paintings (*Painting [Apricots]*, c. 1938, and *Scent of Apricots on the Fields*, 1944.)

What is certain here is uncertainty and a constant struggle for identity. And, of course, there is the unmistakable erotic pageantry. There is also reference to other art, namely that of Marcel Duchamp and Paolo Uccello. The segmented form of Gorky's betrothed is similar in configuration to the right-sided extension and "Wasp or Sex Cylinder" of Duchamp's bride in his seminal mechanico-sexual icon *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23). And the two irregular rectangles (one of which is attached to breastlike forms) above and to the right of Gorky's bride in *The Betrothal II* are related in shape and placement to the "Draft Pistons or Nets" in Duchamp's work. Although Duchamp's ironic detachment, coolest calculation, and his willful rejection of the painterly were alien to Gorky, he was duly impressed with Duchamp's transformational powers in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*,

which he first encountered in his dealer Julien Levy's apartment³ and again later (1943) when it was on extended loan to The Museum of Modern Art. Unlike his friend Matta, Gorky was not so much influenced by Duchamp as he was engaged by a compatriot in metamorphosis, while pitting his heated pantheistic vision against the glacial urbanity of an earlier form of modernism. Gorky was drawing his native Van into contemporary art.

More akin to Gorky's immediate visual concerns than Duchamp was the Italian Renaissance master Paolo Uccello, whose fabulist forms and space and compositional wizardry reached their pinnacle in his *Battle of San Romano* paintings. A reproduction of one of these paintings was occasionally pinned to the wall of Gorky's Union Square studio and, according to his friend and chronicler Ethel Schwabacher, a small copy of a detail Gorky drew of this painting was the catalyst for *The Betrothal*.⁴ Gorky would surely have been attracted to the clamorous throng of Uccello's knights, whose jointed armor seems to turn human form into exoskeletal insects or crustaceans; and the figure of Gorky's betrothed bears some resemblance to the central, speared knight in the Uffizi version of *San Romano*. The outstretched fingers of the wounded knight's raised hand take the same position as Gorky's bride's head. She, too, is pierced by a spear, but one far more phallic and spectral than that skewering Uccello's knight.

We seem now to be in the realm of sexual strife. Indeed, in *The Betrothal II* (the most finished of the three versions), the visual strain induced by the sour striations of the ocher ground with the discordant tones of the bride's mauve head and aqua torso pulsing against it, as well as the wire-snapping tension of the line, reinforce notions of conflict. Gorky was, at this time, not only having marital problems, but his studio had burned down in 1946 and he had also been operated on for cancer. So we might well assume that the excruciating lyricism of *The Betrothal II* is grounded in the autobiographical—until we look at the other two versions. *Betrothal I* is freer and more cursory in execution, more earthbound in its coloration, and less cruel in its sensuality. The flickering tonal contrasts and more variegated paint application, along with its green-brownish-yellow hues, bring camouflage to mind (Gorky had enthusiastically taught a course in camouflage at the Grand Central School of Art in 1941, when he had been rejected for the draft). Here is a willing fecundity more in tune with the expectations announced by the title. We cannot say that *Betrothal I* is more or less true than *The Betrothal II*; with Gorky, subterfuge and sincerity can be one and the same. This artist (born Vosdanik Adoian), who so loved his heritage, found no conflict in assuming a new last name that had already been chosen as a pseudonym by another Eastern European (but not Armenian) creator (Maxim Gorky).

The long unknown third version of *The Betrothal* (Yale) basks in breathtaking lunar grisaille. The loosely flowing vapors of paint are permitted to interact more freely with the overlays of controlled linearity—now slippery and delicate—

to create a transparently joyous *tour de force*. This version is at a far remove from the viscous pathos and feverish linear contours of *The Betrothal II*. So now the ambiguity has been multiplied by three; meaning camouflages making and vice versa, as the polyphony of metamorphic possibilities ceaselessly unfolds.

Gorky's actual working methods reinforce these ambiguities. He made preparatory sketches for most, but not all, of his paintings. After 1942, when he started to spend time in Connecticut and at his new wife's parents' farm in

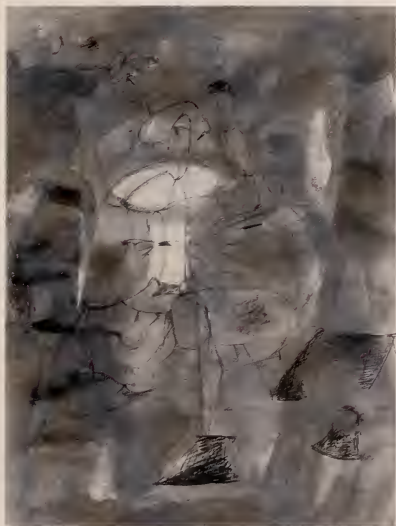


Fig. 4 Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946–47

Virginia, Gorky did many sketches from nature that helped generate his paintings. The less finished drawings exhibited here are not abstractions from nature but rather glyphs of Gorky's feelings from within nature, which were slowly refined and recombined into the configurations that activate his finished drawings and paintings. Unconscious release in nature and aesthetic control are drawn into a dynamic unity. These sketches are not exclusive preparations for the preordained subject matter of *The Betrothal*; rather they are a growing language of form that was articulated in many of Gorky's paintings in 1946 and 1947,

when his compositions took on a new complexity and more figurative turn. There are as many associations with *Agony* and *The Plough and the Song* as there are with *The Betrothal*.

There are also more complete studies that specifically rehearse the final possibilities of the painting; three are exhibited here. And, of course, there is no final version. One of these studies (Fig. 4) plays out some of the possibilities of the washes of the third version, the other (Fig. 3) is quite close to the final composition of *I* and *II*, but for one surprise. The head of the horse in all three painted versions seems to be looking upward. In *II*, the horse's gaping mouth is ominously vaginal; in the other two paintings, it becomes a more benignly ambiguous stain. However, in the gridded study, the horse's head takes on a downward looking, male visage. Is this centaur Gorky?

The drawings and paintings undoubtedly generated the title of the works rather than the other way around. What can be seen and known in Gorky's *Betrothal* images is the profoundly resonant beauty of the shifting states of his

art making with the shifting states of nature's organisms. The true genius of Arshile Gorky, often hailed as the seminal transition figure between Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism, may lie in his ability to give radiant body to the translation of nature into painterly feeling.

Klaus Kertess, Adjunct Curator, Drawings
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

1. Arshile Gorky, "Toward a Philosophy of Art," reprinted in *Arshile Gorky: Drawings to Paintings*, exh. cat. (Austin: University Art Museum, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975), p. 35.
2. Jim M. Jordan and Robert Goldwater, *The Paintings of Arshile Gorky: A Critical Catalogue* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), p. 72.
3. Julien Levy, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), p. 31.
4. Ethel K. Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 131. Schwabacher cites another Gorky friend, the late Jeanne Reynal, as the owner of this drawing; but its present whereabouts are unknown, and it apparently has never been reproduced.

EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Whitney Museum of American Art
October 6, 1993 – January 9, 1994

Yale University Art Gallery
February 1 – April 10, 1994

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
April 24 – June 19, 1994

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width.

The Betrothal, 1947

Oil on canvas, 50 3/8 x 39 3/4
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven;
The Katharine Ordway Collection

Betrothal I, 1947

Oil on paper, 51 x 40 1/16
The Museum of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles; The Rita and Taft Schreiber
Collection. Given in loving memory of her
husband, Taft Schreiber, by Rita Schreiber

The Betrothal II, 1947

Oil on canvas, 50 3/4 x 38
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Purchase 50.3

Study for *The Betrothal*, 1946 (Fig. 1)
Pencil and ink on paper, 11 x 8 1/2
Private collection; courtesy
Stephen Mazoh & Co., Inc.

Untitled (Study for *The Betrothal*), 1946
Watercolor, ink, and colored crayon
on paper, 8 1/2 x 10 7/8
Collection of Margarita Vidal Socas

Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946 (Fig. 2)
Pencil on paper, 11 x 8 1/2
Private collection; courtesy
Stephen Mazoh & Co., Inc.

Study Related to *The Betrothal*, c. 1946
Pencil on paper, 25 3/4 x 19 1/2
Private collection; courtesy
Stephen Mazoh & Co., Inc.

Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946-47
Pencil, charcoal, pastel, and crayon
on paper, 49 x 39
Private collection

Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946-47 (Fig. 4)
Watercolor and pencil on paper,
24 x 18 1/8
Collection of Peter G. Peterson

Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946-47 (Fig. 3)
Pencil and crayon on paper, 24 x 18 1/2
Private collection

Study for *The Betrothal*, c. 1946-47
Pencil on paper, 12 x 18
Private collection

Cover: *The Betrothal II*, 1947 (detail)

An abstract artwork with a monochromatic orange-brown color palette. The composition is filled with fluid, organic shapes and sharp, black, hand-drawn outlines that define various forms, possibly suggesting figures or architectural elements. The background has a textured, slightly grainy appearance. The text 'WHITNEY MUSEUM' is centered horizontally in the middle of the image.

WHITNEY MUSEUM